(c) This has been done keeping in view the consumption pattern in various states, as well as the relative availability of rice and wheat stocks in the Central Pool due to less procurement of wheat by about 20.0 lakh tonnes during 2005-06 as compared to procurement during 2004-05.

Sugarcane at SMP in Maharashtra

1098. SHRI SHARAD ANANTRAO JOSHI: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether purchasing or trying to purchase agriculture commodities at a price lower than minimum support price or the statutory minimum price (in case of sugarcane) is illegal and punishable under the law;

(b) whether in cases where prices are paid over a period of time, it is the price given at the time of delivery, which should be compared with the minimum support prices fixed by the Central Government; and

(c) whether the Government of Maharashtra has moved, along with NABARD that the sugar factories in the State should not pay more than Rs. 850/- per tonne of sugarcane which is much less than the SMP that would become payable by a large number of factories with good sugar recovery and reasonable transport and harvesting costs?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) As per the report received from State Government of Maharashtra, the Minister's Committee for the State of Maharashtra has decided that the sugar mills in the State should pay first instalment of sugarcane price to the sugarcane suppliers as below:

(i) Sugar mills falling in the region (s) other than Mahrathwada and Vidarbha Region Rs. 850/-per M.T.

(ii) Sugar mills fallings in the regions of Marathwada and Vidarbha Region-Rs. 800/- per PMT.

(iii) However, in respect of the mills of other region, if there is possibility of violation of NABARD's norms that sugar mill shall be at liberty to pay first insalment of Rs. 750/-M.T instead of Rs. 800/-M.T. After payment of first instalment, concerned sugar mills are at

liberty to pay higher cane price than SMP as per their financial results, subjects to the fulfillment of NABARD's conditions regarding restructuring of term loans. The first instalment is in line with the payment of SMP under Sugarcane (Control) Order and guidelines of NABARD for the restructuring package.

Protection and Conservation of Ramsar sites

1099. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) how many lakes in kerala are identified as wetland ecosystems under 'Ramsar Sites' along with details thereof;

(b) whether Government have charted out/propose to implement any specific programme to undertake the protection and conservation of those 'Ramsar Sites'; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) Three lakes in Kerala, namely, Ashtamudi (esturaine wetland—61,400 hectare,) Sasthamkotta (freshwater wetland—373 hectare), both from Quillon district and Vembanand (backwaters in Cochin—1,51,250 hectare) have been identified as Ramsar sites.

(b) and (c) Various conservation activities have been proposed for conservation of Ashtamudi and Sasthamkotta wetlands which include agro-forestry, weed control, fisheries development, pollution abatement, plantation, joint forest management and education awareness. After receiving Management Action Plans for various activities from State Govt. for these identified wetlands, an amount of Rs. 64.45 lakhs and Rs. 36.85 lakhs respectively have been released for Ashtamudi and Sasthamkotta wetlands during 2001—2005.

Increase in hazardous waste units

1100. SHRI N.R. GOVINDARAJAR: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that there is an increase of hazardous waste units in the country and there is no proper check on them;

(b) whether the State Pollution Control Boards and Pollution Control Centres have been asked to submit their reports about implementation of Government order on hazardous waste units; and